

Patriot's Day Charity Golf Tourney big success at CasaBlanca

A national tournament founded by legendary golf professional Jack Nicklaus resulted in a capacity field of 88 entries and \$1,200 in funds Saturday in the first annual Patriot's Day Charity Golf Tournament at the CasaBlanca Golf Club.

The Patriot's Day event is presented throughout the nation each Labor Day Weekend to raise funds for the post educational scholarships for the families whose loved ones have been killed or disabled while serving the United States.

"I received an email from the Professional Golfers Association about a month ago asking for support for the Folds of Honor Foundation which provides scholarships for families of those affected by war," explained Mary Ochs, head golf professional at the CasaBlanca Golf Club. "The first thing I did was visit the Patriot Day web site and when I saw they were looking for \$1 per green fee donation over the Labor Day Weekend, I thought we could generate even more for the cause."

The Patriot's Day event created \$5 per green fee to supply a significant boost to the cause. And the fact that Ochs is a former U.S Marine certainly provided the personal enthusiasm needed for a successful venture.

"Once we put together a flyer for the event and received coverage for it, there was incredible response," added Ochs, a native of White Bear Lake, Minn., who has lived in Mesquite for eight years. "I have no doubt that the event will draw a field of 144 players next year considering that we will have more time."

Ochs said the field included male and female participants from Utah, Nevada and Arizona.

"The local support of this charity is beyond belief," said Ochs. "The majority of the people who actually live in Mesquite are retired and we also have a major concentration of veterans."

Ochs was also quick to point out that the event was backed by the CasaBlanca Resort which donated many excellent prizes leading to extra funds through raffle ticket sales. In addition, an auction which spotlighted the largest donor brought in \$250 from competitor and U.S. Navy veteran Michael Ethington of Mesquite.

"It's a great tournament," he said. "The course was in great shape. I'm all for anything to help the families and troops."

Ethington will be featured later this year on Military Night at the ReMax Long Drive Championship at the Mesquite Sports Complex.

Others participating in the event had good things to say about the tournament.

"It was so much fun," said Mesquite resident and U.S. Air Force veteran Barbara Ellestad. "The coolest part is that we were part of a nationwide event for this whole weekend. Knowing that we were going to play in this event today, I saw President George. W. Bush playing in a Patriot's Day event in Texas. It's such a great tribute to the spouses and children of our soldiers both men and women who have given so much for our country in Iraq and Afghanistan.

"The CasaBlanca was so good because they put this event together and sold it out in ten days. That shows the spirit that the people here have for supporting our troops.

Sidney Bounds, a Mesquite resident originally from Richmond, Va., played in the tournament with his wife, Beverly.

“The weather was good and the tournament was a lot of fun,” said Mr. Bounds. “The company was enjoyable, we hit some good shots and life couldn’t be any better.”

Ron Vedd, a Canadian who has lived in Mesquite for three years and in the U.S for 12 years working in the oil and gas industries, played the event with his wife, Julia.

“When it’s hot like this, we try to get everything done by 10 in the morning,” said Vedd. “We met another couple in the tournament who moved here from the Midwest, so we now have another couple to play golf with. Mary did a very good job putting this together. If she isn’t correcting bad swings, she’s putting together great social events.”

Joe Brady, who moved to Mesquite with his wife, Ricki, from Colorado Springs, Colo., in 2005, said he loved the tournament.

“My friend, Dave Brown, came down from St. George to play in the tournament with me,” said Brown. “We are both over 70, so they don’t have a bracket for us, but we sure have fun.”

CAPTION:

The inaugural Patriot’s Day Golf Tournament at the CasaBlanca Golf Club drew an excellent field of participants while also raising funds for post educational scholarships for the families whose loved ones have been killed or disabled while serving in the United States Armed Forces.

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